

1915 "Introductory Note" to Annie Lyman Sears, *The Drama of the Spiritual Life: A Study of Religious Experience and Ideals*, pp. xv-xxiv. New York: Macmillan Co., 1915.

Dated "Memorial Day," 1915. The author had been a student of his; however, he repudiates the suggestion that the book represents his views.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN this Introductory Note I propose not an exposition of the book of Miss Sears, which will speak for itself, nor a critical discussion of its method,—a discussion for which there is here no adequate space,—but a brief indication, first, of what I find most interesting and original in the spirit of this volume, and secondly, of the place which I hope that it will take in the minds of some readers, as it has also taken such a place in my own mind.

I have been privileged to follow, during a number of years, the growth of the author's study and thought regarding the problem of religion, as this study and thought find expression in the present volume. It is true that for some years, in connection with work at Radcliffe College, and as member of one of my own Seminaries at Harvard, Miss Sears has stood in the relation of a pupil of my own. When a teacher writes however brief an introductory statement regarding the book of a pupil, readers are likely to assume that the book has a somewhat close relation to ideas and opinions which the teacher has conveyed to the pupil. The very fact that such an Introductory Note was written tends, therefore, in the minds of some readers, to deprive the book of an opportunity to produce its own fair impression as a piece of independent research, and as an expression of the author's personal interpretation and solution of the problems studied. The reader tends to regard the willingness of the teacher to commend certain features of the book as an acknowledgment of some sort of discipleship on the part of the author, and consequently as a reason why the book should not be treated quite as considerably as if it

stood solely on the foundation of its author's wholly individual study and opinion.

So far as possible I wish to say that such a judgment, if passed upon the book of Miss Sears on the basis of the fact that she was for some years, and in a limited degree, under the influence of my own philosophical teaching, and has worked in Seminaries of mine, while this book has to a considerable extent grown up under the influence of criticisms and suggestions of my own, would be an unjust judgment, unless in passing this judgment the reader were duly to acknowledge the actual degree of independence, and the actual originality of opinion, of idea, and of method which are to be found in this work.

As a student of philosophy I have had frequent occasion to write about the philosophy of religion, and about various problems of the religious life. The book of Miss Sears is neither an exposition of philosophical opinions of my own, nor does it deal with the problems of religious philosophy as I have usually dealt with them, nor is its method one that I could myself apply, nor is its degree of discipleship such as deprives it of a very important independence. The main idea of Miss Sears, the idea expressed in the title of the book, the idea of studying "The Drama of the Spiritual Life," and the idea of the particular way in which this book studies that drama, — these are features which Miss Sears has made thoroughly her own, and which are due to the results of any teaching of mine only in the sense that after Miss Sears had herself thought of this mode of treating the topic of the present work, I approved her plan, watched from time to time the way in which she gave it expression, suggested modes by which she could collect material, and sometimes made comments upon the way in which the material had been collected, and in which it is, in the course of the present volume, used. The metaphysical views which frequently appear in the background of Miss Sears's inquiry are much less expressive of any metaphysical doctrine of my

own than they are independent queries of hers regarding whether or no such metaphysical ideas of hers as have been influenced by me can be rightfully used as a basis for the interpretation of religion. Not so much the pupil, as the critic, of my own special metaphysical theses, speaks in these pages. And the criticisms implied are distinctly such that if I were again writing upon the problems with which Miss Sears here deals, I should have to modify my own expressions of opinion, and in certain respects, my own opinions, in order to be just to what she has presented.

Thus, however near at some points the interpretation of religion which Miss Sears uses approaches interpretations which she has heard in lectures or in Seminaries of my own, she is nowhere writing either as expounder, or as mere disciple, of any philosophy of religion which I have maintained or shall maintain. The book is an expression, first, of its author's personal experience in religious matters, and secondly, of the results of her own decidedly wide reading of the literature wherein certain types of religious experience have received their expression. The range of this reading is the author's own, the choice of the documents of religious experience which she has used has been, in most cases, also largely her own. I have not suggested, in the majority of cases, either the documents read or the special reflections which they have suggested to Miss Sears, although I have very naturally given, from time to time, advice concerning the carrying on of her research, and the interest of the results which she has reached.

Characteristically and especially due to the author of this book is the feature emphasized in the title, and almost everywhere, both in the choice and in the treatment of the documents used in her text. I know of no other effort to deal with the problem of the estimate and the guidance of religious experience which anywhere nearly furnishes what is thus most characteristic of the present volume. As a reader of the documents of the

religious life, Miss Sears is very notably guided by what William James loved to call "the dramatic temperament," and by its interests. James said that the true pragmatists are especially characterized by this predominance in their minds of "the dramatic temper." I do not believe that Miss Sears would call herself a pragmatist, although I leave the judgment of that matter to the reader of this book. But I am sure that this work shows throughout the "dramatic temper," estimates both religious experience and its documents in terms of such a temper, is singularly free from any such "barren intellectualism" as James abhorred, and has not derived these notable features either in its methods or in its materials, from any agreement with metaphysical opinions of my own, or from the fact that the author has listened to lectures of mine, or has attended Seminaries of which I was a leader.

Of course it might be easy to say that the author's mode of treating religious problems shows some signs of the so-called "dialectical method," since certain antitheses and paradoxes of the religious consciousness and of its experience are emphasized, while various attempts are made to solve, or at least to clarify, these paradoxes. Such use of the "dialectical method" might be referred by some readers to philosophical tendencies which Miss Sears has acquired from the sort of philosophy which she has studied, more or less, under my influence. But a fair study of the text of this volume will show how far Miss Sears's treatment of the paradoxes and problems of religious experience which are here in question is from being a mere catalogue of possible philosophical opinions, or a mere study of their dialectics. Experience and life, in precisely these their most paradoxical phases, form her problem, furnish her topics, get expressed in the conflicts of opinion to which she makes reference, and give the background and the basis for so much of the dialectical procedure as plays its part in this volume. But it is not as dialectics, but as life and as experience that the religious

problems with which Miss Sears has to do present themselves, and pass through their various phases. No reader of Miss Sears's third chapter, on "The Way of Life, Its Nature," and of the manifold and various illustrations which appear in that chapter, can regard her interpretation of the "Drama of the Spiritual Life" as the mere summary of any philosophical opinion, or as the product of any merely intellectual dialectics, or of the influence of any one philosophy or philosopher. If the material of religious experience of which the author makes use is in this, and in many other chapters, the result of collection and of observation, the method of collection is new, the observations are everywhere colored by personal experience, the oppositions considered and estimated are stated in terms of no merely abstract dialectic, but in terms of what the poets and the prophets, and in general the leaders and guides of the human race, have noted and have recorded. The way in which these records are used is not due to the acceptance of the opinions of any philosopher, and is everywhere characterized by an independence, both in the choice and in the treatment of the text, an independence which I can only urge the reader of this book to recognize from the first, and to view with high hope, and with keen interest. The reader of this book will find novelties in plenty. That the author has studied the philosophy of religion, he will recognize, but he will readily see that no philosopher is responsible either for her mode of treating the subject or for the results which she obtains. She is neither sceptic, nor uncritical disciple of anybody, nor the adherent of any one dogmatically asserted religious or philosophical creed. The process of the religious life she regards as an empirical fact whose importance is to be tested by experience. The tests of the values of religious experience, and her hypotheses with regard to its meaning, are neither those of Professor Leuba, nor those which William James's "Varieties of Religious Experience" rendered for a while so fascinating.

She does not present a formal psychology of religion, such as one finds in the book of Professor Leuba, nor is this volume a treatise on the history of religion, nor yet on what is technically called "the phenomenology of religion." She does not, like more than one recent religious psychologist, depend upon a collection of materials furnished by individual correspondents, and obtained by means of questionnaires, or similar devices. Nor does Miss Sears attempt to use in a systematic way the scholarly results of such investigators of the history of religion as Professor G. F. Moore, and Professor Toy. She does not trespass upon the field of the Orientalist, of the classical philologist, or any other specialist. Her materials come to her from sources which I should not have expected to find so fruitful, had not her own patience and ingenuity shown how valuable they can be, and in her volume are.

William James sought his materials for religious psychology in the personal records of extraordinary religious geniuses. The philologist and the phenomenologists of religion have found their own materials in the sacred documents, and in the customs and ceremonies and social organization of the various recorded faiths, as well as in the ritual and in the practices of different churches, sects, and other organized religious bodies. Miss Sears can use, and does use, fragments of such material whenever she needs them, so that very various sources furnish for her inspection incidents, and scenes, from the "Drama of the Spiritual Life."

But her interests in such materials, her mode of collecting them, and her arrangement of them are in many respects unique, and serve to distinguish her treatise no less from the histories of religion, from the psychologies of religion, from the "phenomenologies of religion" which are now so numerous, than from the philosophies of religion which are due to the systematic effort to interpret religion in the light of this or of that metaphysical opinion.

Miss Sears uses, namely, and uses very variously and

skilfully, materials that are found in poetry, in religious scriptures, in general literature, sometimes in current literature, very frequently in authors of classic rank, and also very frequently in less widely known books, documents, and writers. Such materials are indeed accessible to all. What is unique in this treatise is the way in which the materials are selected, rearranged, and massed. Unique also is the way in which the materials are employed to illustrate the nature and the meaning of the religious life. We have a good many recent books which are devoted to depicting the lives, the doctrine, and the influence of representatives of some one type of religion. Thus, in particular, the Mystics have for various reasons been treated with great care and in great detail in well-known recent discussions of the religious life, as for instance in the two well-known works of Evelyn Underhill. Miss Sears has taken a very reasonable and appreciative notice, both of the Mystics and of their contribution to religion. But for her the Mystics are only some of those who take part in the "Drama of the Spiritual Life." She neither opposes them, nor is she at their mercy. In her choice of the writers to furnish illustrations for her drama contemporary poets and critics, as well as the prayers, hymns, and poems of the most various ages and religions, Walter Pater, and Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam, Professor Carver, and Phillips Brooks, Marcus Aurelius, and the Buddhist scriptures, Seneca, and Tolstoy, George Meredith, and Bunyan, the Song of Deborah, Homer, and Tennyson, as well as St. Augustine, the Psalms, the Apostle Paul, are used with the greatest catholicity and breadth of interest. Yet this widely various material is so ingeniously massed and so interpreted in terms of the leading ideas in whose illustrations the "Drama of the Spiritual Life" consists, that the book nowhere produces the impression of the miscellaneous.

James's "Varieties of Religious Experience" made use of very various illustrations, and was characterized both

by a tolerant and catholic spirit, and by a great breadth of sympathy. But James, after all, sympathized most with eccentric beings, with geniuses who were more or less abnormal, with saints who were, at their best, converted "cranks." On the other hand, the tolerance of Miss Sears is especially attracted by the persons, the religious documents, the inspirations which illustrate the main ideas of her drama, — ideas which can best be surveyed by considering the titles of her various chapters, and the passages of her book which contain definite summaries of problems and results. If the reader will first become acquainted with the opening chapter of the book, and with some of the summary passages in question, he will hereby be provided with the key to the author's method of selecting and massing her material. Then he will see, that despite the familiarity of the main issues here discussed, and despite the very large space devoted to citations, to quotations, and to what at first sight appears to be unoriginal about the work, the whole is full of a decidedly unique treatment of familiar, but essentially always novel, problems. If in addition to this preparation for reading this volume, the reader also takes account of the author's independence and sympathetically critical attitude towards all doctrines and dogmas of a metaphysical nature, whether they be due to tradition or to philosophy, the work will tend to become to anyone who has once come to understand its spirit and its method, a kindly, a sustaining, and an enlightening companion. As a fact, the book is neither an anthology nor a systematic history or philosophy of religion. It is the portrayal of a process which is at once universally human, and of intense interest to every really awakened individual, deeply dramatic in its significance, and capable of being understood all the better through a reading of the exposition which it here receives, whether the reader, in Lord Gifford's often quoted words, used in his bequest which founded the Gifford lectureships at the Scottish univer-

sities, "Be of any religion or whether he be, as men say, of no religion." In brief, anybody who reads this book and makes it his companion, will, in my opinion, make better use of his own faith, understand better its meaning, appreciate more deeply its problems, be less perplexed by its paradoxes, and better prepared, both to give reasons for the faith that is in him, if he has any faith, and more intelligently adapted for the tolerance, the critically reverent, and the positively constructive examination of the meaning of the "Drama of the Spiritual Life."

Since I am sure that these excellences of the present work are due to its author's skill, ingenuity, and devotion, and not to any accidental instructions which happen to have occurred in technical lectures or in Seminary conferences in which I myself had part, I feel that, in urging the reader to take this book as it is intended to be taken, and to learn from it what its author intends to have learned, I am not merely speaking as a teacher, some of whose views have indeed influenced the author's inquiry. Nor am I speaking in the interests of any technical religious philosophy or psychology. Nor yet am I making light of the great work which technical scholarship has done and is doing for the history, or the psychology, and for the philosophy of religion. I write as I do because of the deep, and, as I hope, wise influence which a due acquaintance with the author's careful collections and admirable massing of her material ought to have, not merely as an exposition of the "Drama of the Spiritual Life," but as an influence which will add, at the present crisis, new ways of acting, and, as I hope, new deeds to that drama. In her Preface the author has wisely spoken of the relation of her book to the situation and to the needs of civilization at the present moment, when all that is dear in and for the spiritual life of humanity is threatened, and is in need of defence, and of some inspiring and reawakening influence. At such a moment a treatise on the philosophy of religion might well have

the fortune to be overlooked altogether. But a volume like the present one, which deals with our greatest problems by means of so tolerant and kindly an exposition, which uses such keenly critical and yet such sympathetic methods of reviewing what mankind has done towards winning the goal of the "Drama of the Spiritual Life," ought not to be neglected. It of course cannot be judged as a technical treatise on the history of religion, or on the problems of the psychology or philosophy of religion. It is a statement of the great needs and issues of life, — a statement wherein the voices of many of the good and wise, both of former times and of our own times, are so brought together, that every one who makes this book his companion should be better prepared to endure the tragedies, and to read the lesson of that "great and terrible day of the Lord," through which, as many of the ancient prophets would be telling us, were they now with us, humanity, if viewed in the light of the "Drama of the Spiritual Life," now seems (if we may use the old and well-worn figure), to be passing.

I heartily commend this book, then, both to those who will find its author's analysis of religious ideas and experiences attractive, as I hope that many will do, and to those who are willing frequently to ponder, and watchfully to read and reread the illustrations of religious experience which our author has collected from so many sources, has chosen for such good reasons, and has massed and arranged so skilfully, in such wise that the ideas in terms of which she depicts the "Drama of the Spiritual Life," are so well lighted up by the reports of experience that render them so vital and so concrete to every justly attentive reader.

JOSIAH ROYCE

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